

free thought

The Largest Circulated Rationalist Monthly



Ms. Vasundhra, Treasurer of IRA presenting a momento on behalf of the Association to Dr. Madalyn Murray O' Hair. Looking on are Dr. Madalyn's grand daughter and Ms. Nirmala Seshadri

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is a Myth, Immortality an illusion, Religion a gigantic fraud

LETTERS

FREETHOUGHT

Sir,

I am a reader of your FREETHOUGHT since last one year. Though I am not a subscriber, I am getting it from one of my friends. But it attracted me so much that I am sending an amount of Rs. 9/- as M. O. for the Annual Subscription of FREETHOUGHT.

I also just want to give a brief information to you that since childhood, I am also against Casteism, religion, linguism etc. I made a vow in my life that I will have an inter-caste marriage. Though originally I belonged to Tamil Iyer Community which is treated as a Brahmin, I had married a young gentleman aged 25 named Mr. Ashok Thool, belonging to Maharashtrian Scheduled Caste (Mahar). I am a young lady of 23 years. Though we faced a great difficulty in getting our marriage done, it was a grand success. Both of us are social and trade union workers.

If an opportunity comes I can come and participate in our IRA activities. My aim in life is to eradicate the casteism and belief in God. For that many of us are working very very hard in villages around Nagpur area. In many villages we had success.

Ms. Chandra Thool, Nagpur

* * * *

Sir,

I am a student of X standard of the local St. Johns High School. One day I happened to see the March 78 issue of FREETHOUGHT. I was very much impressed by the thought provoking articles in it. Now I wish to have the FREETHOUGHT Vol. VII 1977. I am sending Rs. 15/- Kindly send it to me by registered post as early as possible.

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Also I want to be a member of IRA. For this may I know the conditions and membership charges? At the end I request you to suggest me some books that will help me to remove the superstitions and godism from my mind and also from my friends and relatives.

Alok Tiwari, Nagpur

Dear Sir,

Although I am not a 100 % rationalist, I have been reading your magazine for a few months. I very much like it and I would like to become a member of your Association.

S. R. Rangaswamy, Bangalore

* * * *

Sir,

Eventhough I am not a rationalist I am very much attracted when I read FREE-THOUGHT VOLUME VIII. No. 6 (June 78 issue). I want to get copies of FREE-THOUGHT for All months.

Prince George, Trichur

* * * *

SCHOOLS BREED CASTEISM

Sir,

In Bhilai town-ship it is not possible to get admission in the primary schools of Madhya Pradesh for the Rationalists' children without filling the Religion and Caste of the child in the admission forms issued to us. So I am expecting your valuable suggestions and directions in the form Central Govt. Orders if any in detail with No. and date as early as possible to get them admitted in the schools. From 1st July 78 onwards my child's admission has been refused by the Primary School Headmaster of this Bhilai Township. Hoping that your early information or reply will help the Rationalists of Bhilai.

S. V. S. Nair, Bhilai

FREETHOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an atheist. I repeat it. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to heart to be an atheist."

Sameul Taylor Color Coleridge

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Editor.
C. A. Seshadri

AUGUST, 1978

Freethought

THE AQUITTALS

It was first the chief of Anandamarg. Mr. Sarkar, who was acquitted for want of convincing evidence. Now it is the Sankaracharya of Puri. In fact, in the second instance the magistrate had gone to the extent of referring to the efforts of Sankaracharya for ameliorating the lot of the 'Harijans'. It was this same Sankaracharya while opening a temple in March 1973 who had defended 'Chaturvarna' (four castes) saying that it was 'god-made'. He had time and again defended untouchability as part of this Caste system. Even without appearing personally, Sankaracharya was able to get acquitted.

This is a sad commentary on the present authorities in India. What justice could be expected by the down-trodden could well be gauged by the fact that people who threaten lives of Prime Minister and High Commissioners have a much better chance of bailing themselves out of criminal charges. Is it fear or is it bowing to the so-called religious susceptibilities? The foreign minister (who is no more than a leader of R.S.S.-Jansangh combine) has left us in no doubt that he would devote his entire energies to the revival of ritualistic, violent Hindu Raj. He has been a party and a witness to the wasteful expenditure in yagnas (sacrifices) where crores of rupees worth of grains and other articles had been burnt. Is this not arson? should we not bring to book those concerned under the Indian Penal Code?

(cont. on Page No. 255)

Visit of an Atheist Leader From America



Dr. Madalyn Murray O' Hair
Explaining a rather sensitive point
to your Editor.

Madalyn, daughter of a press byterian father and a Lutheran mother has become a world renowned rationalist leader. Born in a Christian family, she was baptised and went through the usual childhood in the American setting. When she was 11 years, on a leisurely day, having no other reading material at hand, she browsed through the the Bible only to find to her horror that bible contained much that was incredible.

inconsistent and illogical. The 30's were a period of inconvenient 'revelation' to her.

During the early 40's, she served in the U.S. army as a Commissioned Officer (earlier having failed to secure admission into Pennsylvania Civil Engineering College due to herself being the first woman to have applied for that course!) in Africa and parts of Europe for 3 years. It was in 1943 that she was ridiculed for her 'scepticism' as a 'god damned atheist' in France. But this was a moment of self-realisation as she knew where she belonged. Returning to U.S.A. she found in a newspaper the picture of a British Lady who was called an Atheist. That gave her the first companion. She was in fact carrying the paper cutting in her person, as it were, to make herself feel that she was not alone in disbelief. She prosecuted her studies after returning to U.S.A. Dr. O' Hair is a M.A., LL.B, Ph.D. in Jurisprudence) and is a qualified psychiatric social worker. She was in the Federal and State Government service as an Attorney. Since 1956 she has been working whole time for atheism.

It was so pleasant, so impressive and so intellectually satisfying for your General Secretary and your Editor to be in the company of Dr. Madalyn Murray O' Hair for 2 days in July, 1978 during her brief visit to Madras. She came to India with her son, Mr. Jon G. Murray who is the Managing Editor of the 'American Atheist' and a Director of American Atheist Centre and her grand daughter. They sprang many a surprise on us by revealing the true nature of American Atheism. Here are a few replies that should interest our readers:

Editor: Is there a difference between an Atheist Humanist, Agnostic or a Rationalist?

O' Hair: Though I now understand that in Indian parlance there is no difference

between any two of these terms, in U.S.A. a Humanist is a broad umbrella under which even a religious person with enough concern for humanity would fall. A rationalist is a person who may 'rationalise religion itself. In fact, the first rationalist of U.S.A. believed in God. An Agnostic is one who goes beyond but not courageous enough to oppose god. To Aldous Huxley, an avowed agnostic, god is beyond one's intelligence. Bertrand Russel was, perhaps, in theory an agnostic but in practice an atheist. In fact in personal correspondence he called me 'a very fine atheist'. An atheist is free from theistic ideas. He accepts only objective reality. It is to the credit of Atheists that they are involved in actively opposing any idea of god. I find that in India, Humanists, Rationalists and Atheists oppose the idea of god equally actively.

Editor: What is your estimate of Atheists in U.S.A?

O'Hair: The figure is between 23 and 27 per cent as was revealed in a survey conducted by California University. But professing atheists are not large in number. What we call 'closet' are large who prefer to remain anonymous. Our number is not as in U.S.S.R., China or other communist countries. It is not even comparable to that of Japan where the atheists are around 41%.

Editor: How much of freedom is allowed by U.S.A. to Atheists?

O'Hair: U.S.A. is a country for religious people and ruled by religious minded. Atheism is frowned upon. Atheist education is not allowed, though our public school have been made to give up religious education. In employment there is considerable discrimination. Any one identifying himself as an atheist does so at the risk of his job.

Editor: What are the activities of Atheist Centre in Austin, Texas?

O'Hair: We have a large administrative and executive office as about 70,000 families are affiliated to the Centre. We have a library which is a treasure house of atheist literature, by all standards. We have our own printing press, computer and so on. We have already established branches in 32 states of USA.

Editor: What are your propaganda media?

O'Hair: We use almost every medium including radio, TV, magazines and press releases. However, our most effective medium is the TV which has effectively replaced public lectures in U.S.A.

For my part, apart from my lectures (for which I get paid) I spread atheism through legal means. We have 41 cases pending in court, the last one being in November 77 when I refused to pray in City Council. Perhaps, your readers will be surprised that in USA work in offices start after a prayer.

Editor: How religious is U.S.A.?

O'Hair: Though the founding fathers of U.S.A. were free from religious bigotry, today's U.S.A. has responded to W. Churchill's 1946 call for a fight against 'Godless Communism' with 'Christian Capitalism'.

In fact, President Carter claims that he speaks to god as often as 20 times a day. He has evangelical, pentecostal outlook. He suggested that each baptist church should send out one missionary to another nation. To him founding of Israel is a 'fulfilment of a bible prophecy'. He has gone on record saying 'after presidency, I will become a missionary'.

This development has to be traced to the post second world war events. During McCarthyism when the church attendance was at its peak at 47% (it was 3% in 1790), the nation's motto was changed to 'one nation under god'. This change has been followed by an inscription on the currencies in 1955 'in god we trust' which you find in every coin and currency note. This was the height of McCarthyism when the fear of communism was fought with religion

Editor : What is the place of Catholic churches in USA ?

O'Hair The catholic church gets a preferential treatment in U.S.A. The Vatican is the richest institution actively engaged in the stock exchange. They own substantial shares in many large undertakings including Hilton Hotel. Lately, integration in public schools has been taken advantage of by the church schools. The public schools run by the Government are almost free. Since integration has been introduced in such schools black children join them in large numbers. 'Panicky' white parents are pulling their children out from the public school and putting them in private schools managed by catholics. Since bus transport, books etc., are free in public schools and as mandatory integration is not applicable to private schools, a bill has been passed on 6-6-78 by which private schools will get 500 dollars per annum per pupil. 95% of the private schools being managed by religious institutions, this is a direct help to religious institutions. The former US Ambassador to India, Moynihan is directly concerned with this bill. It will cost USA 6 billion dollars during the first year itself.

Editor : Which do you think will precede-a social or an economic revolution ?

O'Hair : In U.S.A. with its system of extension credit, social security, aid to dependent children etc., it has to be a social revolution. In an under-developed country like India, it should be an economic revolution.

Editor : what is the scope for international action ?

O'Hair : I have toured Europe, Canada, U.S.A., Mexico and Japan. Though the battles are different and varied, the enemy is the same irrational belief over the last 8000 years. Religious control the minds of masses. We should meet and exchange notes. In fact, I propose a world Atheists' Meet every 3 years. (To our query whether she would be with us in March', 80 to make our Bombay conference a world Meet, she said she would favourably respond to the suggestion .)

Editor : what do you think of the work of I.R.A. ?

O'Hair : I am delightfully surprised, You are doing an excellent job.

Editor : How does the US Government treat you ?

O'Hair : I have been imprisoned 11 times and I expect to be in jail once again. Jon was imprisoned at the age of 8 and my mother at the age of 72.

Inspite of all your handicaps, you Indians enjoy more freedom than we in U.S.A. U.S.A. is a country where there is freedom for conformists, who do not need the freedom!

Editor : what is your plan for world action?

(Cont. on Page 255)

The Mystery Of Hanging Kavadi

Dr. A. T. Kovoov



The Sri Lanka Rationalist Association holds the proud record of debunking two religious cults- walking on Fire and Hanging from Hooks- which have baffled mankind from primitive times. The credit for this exposure should go to its Vice President, Dr. Carlo Fonseka -a son of Medical Faculty of Sri Lanka.

On the 10th of August 1971 Mr. Indra Kumar who was at that time a student in the Colombo Medical Faculty wrote an article in the 'Daily Mirror' entitled: "HANGING ON HOOKS: WHAT IS THE EXPLANATION?"

In this article he asserted that 'medical science' has no explanation to offer for this 'fantastic feat of faith' which, according

to Indra Kumar, "defies natural law". Anything which defies natural law belongs to the category of 'miracles' and in describing the phenomenon of the hanging KAVADI as a miracle. Mr. Indra Kumar was voicing the common feeling among religious people.

On what grounds, do believers regard the phenomenon of the "hanging kavadi" as a miracle? Mr. Indra Kumar defined the grounds with admirable clarity. "Under normal conditions" he wrote. "these devotees are susceptible to pain, bleeding, neurogenic shock, tetanus, gas gangrene and bacterial infection of wounds". However, when a devotee undertakes the ritual of the hanging kavadi, he "NEVER" bleeds, has no pain, does not develop neurogenic shock, tetanus, gas gangrene or bacterial infection. Nor do the hooks from which he is suspended even tear through the tissues under the strain of his weight. Thus,

according to Mr. Indra Kumar, there are no less than seven inexplicable 'mysteries' concerning the phenomenon of the hanging kavadi.

Let us look at each of these "mysteries" in turn.

A Flop

The South African rulers decided to issue special gold coins with the image of their Prime Minister to commemorate the National Party's thirteenth anniversary in power. Of the 5,000 produced, however, only about 1,500 have been sold. There are some who say that they will sell much better when Vorster and his apartheid regime are gone and forgotten!

Lack of Pain

How is the devotee able to tolerate the piercing of his flesh with hooks? It is now known to physiologists that pain has two components the sensation itself and the emotional reaction to the sensation. The reaction to pain is largely determined by the Significance to the individual of the cause of

the pain. And it is the reaction to pain, and not the sensation itself, which determines the presence or absence of suffering. The devotee who is having hooks being driven through his flesh has voluntarily submitted himself to the procedure. The cause of the pain, therefore, has no ominous significance to him. Accordingly, he does not react apprehensively to this pain. Hence he does not suffer from whatever pain he may experience.

Again, as every well-informed medical man knows, some wounds can be quite painless. Thus the majority of soldiers freshly and grievously wounded in warfare interrogated by Beecher did not complain of any great pain. This was because of the special significance of the wounds to them for they meant, at least temporarily the end of the war for these wounded soldiers. So painless wounds are not unknown to medical science, though perhaps not to all medical students.

Nor is that all. Strong emotion be it of religious non religious or even irreligious origin can block the perception of pain. A devotee submitting himself to the ritual of the hanging kavadi does not feel pain under the impact of the religious emotions aroused in him.

Recently a rationalist - minded young volunteer M. C. Jayasuriya who openly spurned divine aid, went through the procedure of hanging kavadi on three separate occasion without showing any obvious sign of pain

LACK OF BLEEDING:

Devotees believe that the absence of bleeding from the dozen or so wounds sus-

tained by the devotee during the hooking up process is a sign of supernatural aid. However, at least three natural factors combine to reduce bleeding to an absolute minimum during the flesh-piercing procedure one is the increased secretion of a hormone called Adrenaline by the adrenal medulla gland. Adrenaline caused constriction of blood vessels in the skin and superficial tissues-the very tissues through which the hooks are inserted. The second factor is the activation of a mechanism termed the "extrinsic mechanism" which greatly speeds up the process of blood clotting. This speeding up is due to the liberation of a chemical factor from the tissues damaged by the penetrating hooks. This tissue

factor causes blood to clot in a matter of seconds, and blood clotting is one device the body has for arresting bleeding from damaged tissues.

The third, and possibly the most important factor, which helps to reduce the amount of bleeding almost to nothing is the tension exerted by the hooks on the damaged tissues. A hook is inserted only after the skin and the underlying tissues at a given site in the body are "pinched up" and

"pinching up" the tissues has the same effect on the blood vessels of the region as the application of external pressure to the region it causes obliteration of the blood vessels. Moreover, once a hook has been inserted tension is applied on the hook by means of a string, so that external pressures on the blood vessels of the region continues to be applied. These three factors in combination can well prevent bleeding from the wounds sustained by a person undertaking the hanging kavadi even without any divine aid. Mr. Jayasuriya who did not

Canny offer

The Cutty Sark whisky firm in Scotland has offered a £1 million prize to any one who finds a UFO—unidentified flying object—and proves that it has been activated to arrive on earth from beyond our solar system. Some years ago the same firm offered a similar prize to any one who found the Loch Ness Monster. No one did, but Cutty Sark got a lot of publicity.

invoke any divine aid, did not bleed from the wounds he sustained during the hooking up demonstrations he gave.

ABSENCE OF NEUROGENIC SHOCK :

In plain English developing neurogenic shock means fainting. As is well known, people usually faint either when they are in severe pain or when they are emotionally upset e. g. by bad news or by the sight of blood. Why does not a devotee who is being hooked up faint? Because he does not experience severe pain, nor is he emotionally upset during, the ritual. Mr. Jayasuriya did not faint either, for precisely the same reason. Absence of Tetanus, Gas Gangrene and Bacterial Inflection for wounds.

These "mysteries" can conveniently be considered together because they all have to do with bacterial infection of one sort or another. It is claimed by believers that devotees who subject themselves to the self-mortification of flesh-piercing never develop tetanus, gas gangrene or infection of their wounds despite the fact that they take no medical precautions of any kind. This immunity from bacterial assault, devotees contend, is also a special sign of divine favour. Concerning this claim the first thing that requires to be said is that those who make it are almost invariably those who have never followed up these devotees beyond the ritual. For my part, although I have never encountered a devotee who had got tetanus or gas gangrene as a result of undertaking the hanging kavadi, I have encountered several whose wounds had festered. Sometimes in the same devotee, some wounds fester whilst others heal uneventfully. Does this mean that divine aid was brought to bear on some wounds of the devotee and not on others? A more rational explanation than that surely must be sought, and such an explanation must suggest itself to any one equip-

d with even an elementary knowledge of surgery.

Of the vast number of bacteria in our environment only a few are injurious to man. When bacteria enter a wound the outcome depends on the interaction of three factors: the nature and virulence of the bacteria, the number of bacteria that

Life 60 million years ago

American expert can now determine the age of geological deposits with a high degree of accuracy by using unique "portraits" of long-extinct micro-organism. Descriptions of 105 types of these petrified monocellular micro-organisms or nummulites have been compiled by scientists at the Institute of Geology of the Armenian Academy of Sciences. Each variety of nummulites constitutes a "yardstick" of time. These organisms developed over millions of years, changing totally in the process. On the basis of minute changes in the structure of monocellular organisms, Specialists are able to categorise geological deposits as belonging to one or other period of Paleocene, an epoch separated from us by approximately 68 million years. The system of classification worked out at the institute can also be used in compiling predictive geological maps.

Courtesy : NEW TIMES

entered the wound and the general health and resistance to disease of the injured person. When bacteria enter a wound in a strong, healthy man festering will occur only if a large number of a virulent strain of bacteria have entered the wound. It is a fact that bacteria become established only with difficulty in healthy tissues with a good blood supply. After all, it is a common observation that, of all the wounds that little children sustain in the ordinary round of daily life, only a few fester, even without any special treatment.

As for tetanus and gas gangrene, these deadly diseases are caused by a variety of bacteria called Clostridia which are usually found in faces and well-manured soil. Devotees who undertake the ritual of hanging from hooks are strong, are healthy adults and the wounds they sustain are not likely to become heavily contaminated with either faces or well-manured soil. That is why they are not likely to develop either tetanus or gas gangrene as a result of the wounds they receive. After all, of all those who sustain wounds in everyday life, those who develop tetanus and gas gangrene are a microscopic minority. The reason why such a fuss is made by doctors about tetanus and gas gangrene is that, when they do occur, they are always serious and often fatal. This does not mean, however, that they are common diseases. The infrequency or even the absence of tetanus and gas gangrene, among devotees who have submitted themselves to the hanging kavadi is, therefore, not a special sign of divine favour. Further, it is simply an exemplification of the well-known medical aphorism that "rare diseases are rare". The fact is that tetanus and gas gangrene are rare, not only among theists who sustain wounds in the fulfilment of vows to their assorted gods, but even among atheists who acciden-

tally sustain wounds and do precious little about them.

LACK OF TEARING OF FLESH :

This is perhaps the most incredible feature in the "hooking business" to the ordinary observer. Why, he wonders in utter disbelief and amazement, don't the hooks tear through the tissues of the devotee's back, under the strain of his weight? The answer to this mystery is the answer to a problem in elementary physics. Suppose you hang a weight of 10 lbs from a spring balance, the balance will needless to say, read 10 lb. Suppose you now suspend the same 10 lb. weight from two spring balances, instead of one, each balance will now read 5 lb. In like manner, if you suspend the 10 lb weight from four spring balances, each balance will register a reading of only 2.5 lb. No doubt the general idea which the above example illustrates is now clear in the reader's mind. It is not for nothing that the devotee hangs himself from at least 6 hooks. Not even the most devout devotee, who fancies himself as "becoming one with the deity" during the ritual, has dared to hang himself on just one hook. The skin and underlying tissues of a 120 lb man will not snap under a strain of a weight of $120 \div 6 = 20$ lb. But they will certainly snap under a strain of $120 \div 1 = 120$ lbs,

So much for the "seven mysteries" connected with the "hooking business". When Mr. Indra Kumar went so far as to assert presumptuously that this "fantastic feat of faith" baffles "medical science" he was either indulging in gross hyperbole (pardonable in a non-medical student or speaking out of sheer ignorance (unpardonable in a medical student of even average intelligence). +

The Vacuum Argument - Myth, Mystery or Fact?

D. K. Narayanan

(Vice President, I. R. A.)

When the knowledge of man was limited and the physical world was not amply investigated, people thought of vacui wherever there were vacant places as experienced through their naked senses. A scholar of the pagan past could be 'right' when he referred to a vacant cupboard, an empty bottle or an unoccupied room to be of vacuum; but he could never be 'correct' in his concepts of the vacuum. A vacant place, cupboard or a room is full of atmospheric air which is very much an admixture of different matters, nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, water vapour etc.

The Earth's atmosphere has no clear boundary. It can be measured upto a height of two thousand to three thousand kilometres from the periphery of the Earth. Thereafter atmosphere becomes thinner and thinner and ultimately it runs out into interplanetary gas. In the vast depth of this atmosphere, nowhere exists a vacuum a complete emptiness devoid of material presences. Any attempt to create an artificial vacuum by blowing out the atmospheric air from a cylinder, or any other equipment is also as futile as finding out vacuum in the naked domain of the atmosphere as we have seen in the torricellian tube.

One could still imagine that a vacuum might exist some where beyond the boundaries of the atmospheric and away from the earth's surface up above a distance of

three thousand kilometres and more. But that too has been belied by the results of recent scientific investigations. At such a height at an altitude of above three thousand kilometres, there are countless number of charged particles recording the presence of protons, with energies of a hundred million electro volts. They have been attracted by the Earth's electro-magnetic field. These charged particles have spiralled around the Earth in the electro magnetic field to form the three Radiation Belts, viz. the outermost belt, the middle belt and the inner belt.

INTER - PLANETARY SPACE

In the inter-planetary space covering the powerful radiation belts, the area is invested with many kinds of matter, numerous

How to preserve eggs ?

A new method of preserving eggs has been developed in Zagorsk, Moscow Region. The eggs are submerged for seyeral seconds in molten paraffin, then kept for 20 or 30 minutes in an ozone air mixture in which the paraffin oxidises, forming a bacteriocidal shell which keeps the eggs from spoiling for eight or nine months.

Courtesy : NEW TIMES

charged particles, of protons and fields in the outer and the middle radiation belts. The inner belt also is formed of protons, mostly resulting from each decay of a neu-

tron yields a proton, an electron and a neutron. The proton is trapped by the Earth's magnetic field forming the inner radiation belt. "Natural decay" of neutrons released by the constant bombardment of cosmic rays with the upper layers of the atmosphere. There is also a "gaseous train extending from the Earth away from the sun", as a result of the pressure of light upon tiny particles of dust and gas of the atmosphere. There is, therefore, no vacuum existing in these areas, in the regions at the altitude of even fifty thousand kilometres and more. Soviet Scientists could find out an increase in ionised particles some ten thousand kilometres away from moon, which

sun and stars, light rays, X-rays, infra red red and ultra violet rays-all possessing mass, velocity and energy testifying the qualities of matter.

Still further, farther in the vastness of the Universe, away from the moon, the sun and the milky way, there is still no trace of a vacuum. In the space there, there are particles of gas, free electron, protons, gravitational fields and cosmic rays. This is the case even beyond a distance of thirty thousand light years away from the sun and the milky way! And, in the inter galactic space, there are also possibilities of the

presence of some hitherto unknown form of matter

Christmas Gift!

For thirty-eight years Mr. and Mrs. Judge, a British couple, lived in peace and harmony. In the thirty-ninth year, their marriage developed a crack. Mrs. Judge sued for divorce because she could no longer bear up with her husband's growing habit of whistling tunes and singing hymns. Her patience gave out on Christmas, when Mr. Judge whistled non-stop from 6 to 10 p.m. and repeated his "concert" the following morning. According to the International Herald Tribune, she was granted a divorce on the grounds of her husband's "unreasonable behaviour".

means there are "elementary particles, with energies of several tons of electron volts surrounding the moon."

OUTER SPACE

The emptiness of the outer space is only apparent. The seeming vacuum is illusory. For, the outer space is pervaded by the molecules of gases, radiation of

of space."

What a sorry plight in search of a vacuum in the Universe! The vacuum theory is, imaginary, subtle and unrealistic in so far as the physical expanse of the universe is concerned. It would be in the fitness of things to forget about this abominable VACUUM in the domain of Physics, at last!

(To be continued in the next issue)

FREETHOUGHT

Achilles' Heel of the Rationalist

R. LAKSHMINARAYANAN

*Hariharan Poonjar of Bombay
writes: "Dr Kovo"*

In the introduction to "Begone Godmen," A. T. Kovo confines himself to this aspect of the problem [fighting against all kind of superstitions about gods, godmen, exorcists, miracle makers, soothsayers et al] and has not ventured into an analysis of the economic and social roots of the continuance of superstitions and the belief in gods and religions. I personally feel that in the ultimate analysis the battle against superstition can succeed only as a part of the battle of the proletariat. In other words the social conditions of alienation which leads to superstitious beliefs as an escape route from the miseries of life have to be abolished. Hariharan Poonjar ^{has} hit the

nail on the weakness of the rationalist movement.

SAI BABAS SCHOOLS

To take a concrete example, the rational objects, rightly, to Sai Baba starting yet another college. Sai Baba does this to

and colleges are started and run by moneyed individuals or groups, retorts; "I say, somebody has to start schools and colleges. What is the harm if Sai Baba does it? For long, Christian missions have run colleges and schools in India. Why shouldn't Hindu missionaries do it now for a change?" My answer is: It is the business of the State to run schools and colleges. And that is in accordance with the Marxist philosophy. What right has an anti-Marxist rationalist, who presumably approves of private enterprise in general, to object to Sai Baba schools and colleges? So the anti-Marxist rationalist ties himself up in knots. You cannot prevent Sai Baba schools and colleges mushrooming anymore than you can prevent Birla school colleges. * In other words, Sai Baba has a legitimate place in the capitalist order.

What is the rationalist's answer to a sophisticated poser like: "Why do you want to fight against Sai Baba? He provides cheap psychiatric treatment to thousands". Or again: "Why do you rationalists want to disturb the peace of temple goers? Let them find solace in blind-worship." The mere rationalist has no satisfactory answer to such questions. It is only scientific socialism that removes many sources of worries that drive people to Sai Babas and temples. Take for instance worries due to chronic diseases, especially skin

* There is however another way of stopping Sai Baba schools and colleges without possibly affecting Birla schools and colleges. That would be to bring in legislation that would make making fraudulent claims a punishable offence. Another bye-law in the Educational Institutions Act (if there is one such Act) would take care that no person convicted for any offence shall be associated with schools and colleges. Let rationalists explore this way by all means. Marxists will only rejoice over any partial success of the rationalists through legislative tinkering.

Courtesy: NEW TIMES

widens his power base. The complacent bourgeois used to the capitalist system, in which most schools

diseases. In all capitalist countries, specialist medical treatment is very expensive or hard to find. So treatment is often postponed until the disease becomes serious. In socialist countries such sources of worries would be considerably reduced. [Read in this connection: Mike Davidow, Russia seen through the eyes of an American.]

MENDICANTS IN ROBES

Or consider why persons like Chinmayananda or Dattabai keep educated crowds spell-bound. In hour-long mesmeric talks embellished with specious metaphors and padded up with traditional wisdom and occasional common-sense, they sell an illusory quantity they call "spirituality". The gist of the glib talk is usually: Man does not live by bread alone (as if everybody is assured of bread in their society). Even when all the basic needs are satisfied (as if they are) there is a yearning for something. That something is "spirituality". Now, more people suffer from want of basic necessities (food, shelter and clothing) and from want of facilities to develop their talents than from want of "spirituality". So what is the motivation of people like Chinmayananda or Dattabai? The motivation is this: their imposing scholarship transforms them from mere mendicants in saffron robes to respected pillars of capitalism, from ordinary parasites on society to presidents of prosperous trusts.

How many girls in India can afford to learn Bharata Natyam? How many boys have to give up their sports activities because of the compulsion to pursue studies harder? How many young people are denied professional careers because of exorbitant capitation fees? All such frustration are grist to the "spiritual" mill. Only scientific socialism offers facilities to all to develop their artistic and

cultural inclinations. Only such facilities can wean people from the pursuit of illusory "spirituality".

APOLITICAL RATIONALISTS

we understand the attitude of professed apolitical rationalists. But I am glad to say, if you scratch a rationalist, you usually find a Marxist, although he may not admit it. Sometimes of course you have to scratch very hard. Without in anyway belittling the contribution of rationalists like E.V.R., Gora and Ambedkar.

An Untouchable

'JAGGU'

I am a man
like other human
other's call me, harijan
I mean god man.....!

I am a low caste
I don't know what is its taste
When I walk, but
every one wink me at.....!

They do not allow in temple
this is the plea of other people
why do they tackle
me as a football.....!

I cannot drink water
Where do the other
I have to go for the river
this is the people's fever.....!

To them cow is sacred
but they treat me untouched
to them an animal is God
but I am bad.....!

In this religious land of dark
What I say is dog's bark
So that our country's progress mark
remains very back.....!

we cannot help feeling that these great men have frittered away their energy and leadership qualities by starting splinter movements instead of embracing Marxism, the well tried, international rationalist philosophy with an insight into the economic causes of exploitation of man by man and a revolutionary plan of action. The political rationalist who claims to keep away from political "ideology" can be said to pay only lip-service to rationalism.

The presence of professed anti-Marxists among genuine rationalists is as understandable as the presence of top scientists among the devotees of Sai Baba and Maharsi Mahesh Yogi. While the latter are victims of religious brain-washing, the former are victims of constant anti-Marxist propaganda. (I can hear someone saying, the Marxists are victims of Marxist brain washing, the rationalists are victims of brainwashing by FREE THOUGHT etc.).

IS MARXISM A RELIGION?

The most vicious group of anti-Marxists are to my mind the 'super-rationalists' who would shun Marxism as being another religion and a dogma. The 'super-rationalists' generally play the game of oneup-manship, out-Marxing Marx and out rationalising the rationalist. They deserve our attention because many rationalists can succumb to "super-rationalism". One such "super-rationalist", Anindita Mutsuddi wrote in CARVAN (Sep. 1977) in an

article entitled "Old opium changeth yielding place to new". Is there any difference in the zeal, aspiration, purpose and spiritual intensity displayed by the pilgrims crowding at the Hazratbal Mosque to have a glimpse of a single hair of Prophet Mohammed and the qualities displayed by atheist communists lining up in mile-long queues in Red Square to pay a visit to Lenin Mausoleum? Did not Lenin inspire artists, writers and poets to create poems, arts and sculptures just as Lord Buddha, for that matter any spiritual leaders did? Basically there is no difference. It is the same thing with different names. To fight religion, Marx created another religion. If any religion is blind and irrational, communism also is blind and irrational by the same standard. Are not Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn the victims of the same sort of inquisition as Galileo and Copernicus were?"

Ran on maigret

The South African racists have launched a crusade for "moral purity". Their censors have banned a whole number of books by progressive writers. The initiator of the campaign is the Rev Koot Vorster, the Prime Minister's brother. According to the magazine Jeune Afrique, 370 brochures, 95 films, 305 calendars and 18,402 books have already been prohibited as 'harmful to public morals'. The prescribed authors include Georges Simenon, Peter Abrahams and other well known writers.

(NEW TIMES)

The criticism stems from a primitive view of Marxism. A Marxist State does not undertake to eschew everything that ^{smacks} _{of} religion (to please the anti-Marxists!). Marxists do not repudiate all traditional gestures, like paying homage to the great dead. Granted that ^{smacks} _{of} mummifying Lenin or Mao and building Mausoleums to house the mummies are unnecessary. But that does not make Marxism a religion. I suppose there are no priests in the Mausoleums to mediate between the saints and

the visitors promising salvation to the individuals on payment of a tribute.

The charge that Marxism is a religion is the result of a simplistic, if not malicious, syllogism: Religion is a set of beliefs with a mass following. Marxism is a set of beliefs with a mass following. Hence Marxism is a religion. Q. E. D. This is mere semantic quibbling exploiting the limitations of language. If it comes to a crunch, the frivolous charge that Marxism is a religion, deserves the frivolous answer: if it is a religion, it is a better religion than all the earlier religions.

SUPER - RATIONALISM IS NIHILISM

This "super-rationalism" I suspect, is a posture. The real objective is: any stick is good to beat the Marxists with. The super rationalists don't even serve the cause of rationalism. For they are capable of saying: to fight religion, you create another religion, namely, rationalism. What is the difference between rationalists shouting rationalist slogans in Palaghat and

A Request

1. Articles, anecdotes, Jokes, cartoons etc. which will be of interest to Rationalists are invited from readers.

2. Matter for publication in PREETHOUGHT may kindly be typed in double space, on single side and sent in duplicate. Necessary postage may please be affixed for returning the matter not selected for publication.

pilgrims chanting on their way to Sabarimalai? This "super-rationalism" is a variety of bourgeois nihilism.

Finally, the proof of the rationalist pudding is in eating it. Even anti-Marxists will admit that only the socialist countries keep religious movements in check and put spiritual pedlars, astrologers and miracle mongers behind bars, where they belong.

In fact, while the super-rationalist argument that Marxism is a religion is meant for the consumption of intellectuals, the propaganda for the masses is that Marxism is anti-religious.

What God Has Taken

In five years, a bank teller in Summerville, USA donated \$60,000 to the local parish, thus earning the reputation of being one of the most pious and god fearing people in the neighbourhood. Local preachers never wondered, from where he got the money. And when he was unexpectedly arraigned on charges of having embezzled \$400,000, said the International Herald Tribune they did not manifest the slightest desire to return the money, explaining the money, explaining that sender had donated the money to God and that what God has taken.....

New Times

The rationalists form a minority in India. They can only fret and fume at the spread of the power base of Sai Baba, Chinmayananda and Dattabai. The Marxists in India also fret and fume at present, but they have hope in the road roller momentum of International Marxism. I therefore appeal: Rationalists! Beware of 'super-rationalist' sophistry!

People's faith in magic, mantras and ghosts and spirits seems to be increasing these days. So also is the number of those who seek to exploit this faith. A few years back in Ladni Kherna the following incident occurred

Lodhi Kherna is in Madhya Pradesh, near Bhopal. It had a huge ashram of Dhoot Baba. Whoever the Baba was pleased with, he removed his troubles. He had a female disciple by name Shanti Bai. When she described Baba's miracles the people were simply astounded. In the same town there lived the wife of a lecturer in the University, Sheela who was childless. So she went with her husband to obtain Baba's prasad. Her husband, Mehta, was well-to-do. He had a car, a bungalow. When they reached the ashram the Baba was preaching. Baba knew by heart Geeta, Ramayana etc. By his sweet voice and his preaching he succeeded in impressing Sheela and her husband.

YEARNING FOR CHILD

So Sheela's car was seen daily outside the Ashram. One day she told Baba her dearest wish. Baba gave her magical pinch of ash and asked her to keep it in her vagina for seven days after menses, and thereafter to visit the Baba again. Sheela went to Baba after seven days. Baba invited her to his private room to offer her Devi's prasad, telling her that she should come in completely nude. Sheela was so much under his influence that she did it. Thereafter the Baba had sex with her-as also five of his disciples. Back home, Sheela told her husband what had happened. But the matter

Black Magic : Three True Stories

could not be reported to the police. So the husband kept quiet, though much upset. After a few days a youngman asked him for 5000 rupees. The man gave the lecturer-husband an envelope which contained Baba's and Sheela's photographs.

A week went by. Then the same youngman came back with a set of 25 obscene photographs. Now Mehta told a police officer friend of his, the whole story. The Police then surrounded the Baba's ashram. They found in one of the rooms a human skeleton in whose mouth was fixed a mike which was connected to Baba's room. Also were found a kidnapped woman and many obscene Photos.

The case went to the court. But no one was willing to be a witness against the Baba. Finally, his disciple Shanta Bai was coerced into exposing the truth. The Court sentenced the Baba to three years rigorous imprisonment. He appealed to the High Court, where his sentence was enhanced to five years. Now Baba is out of jail and who knows what new mischeif he would be cooking.

MONEY CRAZY BAIJU

In the Sarguja district of Madhya Pradesh a cowned Baiju became jobless because of flood. So he turned into an ojha, in which profession he got astonishing success. He married too. In 1974 he went to Gaunpur where one Ram Dayal inspite of having two wives was issueless. Baiju's assurance to remedy the situation gave him a new hope. The two began visiting each other. Baiju told him

that were he to die without becoming a father, he would surely become a Brahma Rakshasa.

Ram Dayal fell on his feet. So Baiju began to give him the holy ash etc. On 19th January, 1975 suddenly Baiju went to Ram Dayal's house and told him that he had come to rid the latter of the evil spirits plaguing his life. So quickly fire was lit and Baiju asked Ram Dayal to send his elder wife off to her parent's home. She is inflicted by a spirit from there. The elder wife left for her parent's home. To complete the ritual Baiju took Ram Dayal and his younger wife to the village pond. There he took his axe out of the folds of his blanket and cut off the heads of both husband and wife. Then he went back to Ram Dayal's house and there killed Ram Dayal's old mother and his nephew. And he took away all the belongings, cash and jewellery. The police of Prem Nagar had difficulty in tracing the murderer but Ram Dayal's elder wife told them that Baiju had six toes on one foot. That led to his being apprehended.

A MOROUS BALYOG

But Balayogi of Lucknow alias Dr. Ajay Joshi proved greater than above two. His preaching fascinated people. He was deadly against all worldly wealth and ties. He would tear off and throw away a ten rupee note offered in his poojathali. He condemned people for hoarding money. So he began to get lot of money as offering. He would put a tantrik ash on one rupee and give them to his disciples. The rest of the currency he tore off. One day Lucknow's famous Kathak dancer and

wife of retired CID inspector, Shri Sexena, went to listen to the preaching. Her name was Veena, she was 22. She was greatly impressed by Balayogi. So she invited the sadhu to her place. He told her that he was MBBS from Belgium. He visited Veena's home regularly. Then one day he and Veena disappeared. The police were informed. On January 11, 1975 the two were arrested in a hotel at Jaipur. Veena disclosed that she had ha a Gandharva marriage with Balayogi. The father accepted the marriage. On 21 December 1975 the two had a son.

In the meantime a resident of the Loco colony, Krishna Chand complained to the police that Balyogi had taken a lot of money from him on the pretext of getting him job promotion. But the promotion never came through. The police arrested Balayogi. Then it was found that his real name was Babu Joshi and he was not a doctor at all. He had learnt a bit of medicine in Gurukul Kangari.

Good Advice

Never shout "Stop thief!" if your house is being burgled, advise the authors of the book "Pour vous defendre," recently published in Paris. Better shout "Fire!" Why? Because, the authors say, if you shout "Stop thief!" your neighbours may prefer not to risk their own safety and will leave you in the lurch. And if you shout "Fire!" they will surely run out because of the fear that the flames may spread to their houses too.

—NEW TIMES

etc. Like with Veena, he had made other marriages too. When the Police were questioning him in the lock up he swallowed something which resulted in his vomiting blood after a while and then dying.

—Courtesy: Nagpur Times

FREETHOUGHT

My village is like an innocent girl whom it is easy to cheat and hence Astrologers, Palmists, Spiritualists and all other charlatans who claim the Occult powers still crop up there.

Here is the story of a young man, Madhavan who happened to be a Wizard by compulsion just to save his family from utter poverty. Madhavan's father was a renowned occult practitioner in my village and it was his only source of income. When

Madhavan completed his Matriculation nature's

cruel hands took his father away and the burden of the whole family fell upon his young shoulders. He knocked at several doors for Government service to feed his ailing mother and three young sisters but his efforts proved to be only a wild goose chase. Not disappointed but reluctantly, Madhavan turned to follow his father's traditional job and within a short span of time his fame as a warlock spread even to the neighbouring villages and he had a reasonable reward too.

Three years back during my short visit to my village on leave, incidentally I heard about Madhavan. I contacted him and enquired about the secret of his success. With an artificial smile on his lips he told me, Gopi this is an art, an art of nothing but cheating the innocent. On my request he cordially invited me to witness one of his performances with a pre-condition that I should not disclose his secret to anybody.

The day came and I reached Madhavan's house in time. He showed me an egg. With the help of a syringe he injected a small quantity of 'blue water' in the egg and he covered the little hole made

The Story of a Wizard

by the needle with lime. He took some more articles in a bag. At 8 p.m. we proceeded to the house where he was booked. A young girl of 18 was given some 'Philtre' by an unidentified 'Manju' to conquer her love. Madhavan was called in to remove the Philtre from the girl.

He started his performance as usual. The girl was seated before the occultist.

Coconut, flowers, 'Aratham' (which is made out of lime water and turmeric powder and sorts of powders) and all other required materials were arranged with chanting of 'Mantras'. He threw 'Aratham' and the powders into the fire, after swinging thrice over the girl's head. This process was going on for a pretty long time and in the mean time the wizard ordered for an egg. When the people around us were keen to see the performance, very cunningly Madhavan replaced the egg with that of his. In the end he asked for a white plate in which he opened the egg and dropped it. To everyone's utter surprise, it was blue in colour. What more evidence was needed for removal of 'Philtre' from the girl? The innocent spectators fully believed it. Occultist Madhavan's fame grew day by day.

A few months back I got a letter from Madhavan conveying to me that he has been appointed in the State Transport Corporation. He wrote 'I bid fare-well to my occult practice. Today I am joining K.S.R.T.C.'

If proper employment or any other means of livelihood is provided, the so-called occultists, Babas and Miracle men can be kept away from cheating the gullible public. △

Possession is one among the 'miracles' which are unintelligible to a layman. Possession is a common phenomenon to rural dwellers and though not frequent, it is not strange

event to urban dwellers. First of all let us understand how a possessed person appears and what he or she does! The person who is said to be 'possessed' by any 'Spirit' (good or evil) appears to be in drowsy state. The possessed appears to be completely unaware of his environments. He, along with odd gestures, and frightening look, prattles something which would be readily taken for granted to be predictions by the innocent people. The 'possessed' also perform certain manifestations which are generally believed to be miracles by the gullible onlookers.

Burning camphor on naked palm is one among such 'miracles'!

The 'possessed'

prattle something for sometime and then says "I want to go now! Give me the burning camphor." As soon as the 'possessed' utter these words the devotees believe that the 'spirit' which the person is possessed by, is getting ready to DEPART from the person and they get the camphor ready. A lump of camphor will be placed on the palm of the 'possessed' and lit. The possessed lets it burn for a moment without any pain. Then behold! He swallows that camphor in flames! Soon after the performance of this 'miracle' the 'possessed' becomes a normal person. There may be some sceptics who condemn all that are said by the 'possessed' to be nonsense. But even such skeptical individuals believe when they witness this phenomenon and start developing faith in that spirit's power without any more 'sinful suspicion'!

TRUTH UNRAVELLED

But is it really a miracle? No naught of that sort! Then how can camphor be burnt on naked palm without any harm? The answer

Is burning Camphor on palm a miracle ?

for this lurks in camphor itself! Before knowing its secret let's put a question to ourselves. Why should only camphor be preferred by 'spirits'? Why not any other inflammable substance?

Other inflammable substances are not at all used! What happens if used? If other substances are used no 'spirit' can save the 'possessed' from getting blisters! No other substance except camphor is used because it is a volatile substance. What if it is a volatile substance? Camphor when ignited turns to vapour without first changing into liquid state. Because of this nature of the camphor, it doesn't harm when lit on the palm! Does it not sound incredible?

yes it does! But place a lump of camphor on your palm and light it! You can realize the truth! Your

palm will not be burnt! You'll not feel any sort of pain except the slightest warmth. So, it is not the power of any spirit that enables the 'possessed' to perform this seemingly impossible and incredble act! But it is only the volatility of camphor that does all!

Now what about the second part? How can burning camphor be swallowed? Doesn't it harm mouth? No! The problem of getting mouth burnt arises only if the camphor can remain burning even after entering the mouth of the 'possessed'! The burning camphor will be extinguished as soon as it enters mouth because of the saliva. Another point is when it is thrown in, mouth will be shut thus preventing any more supply of oxygen. If the fear of getting burnt still exists that could be over-come easily by more salivation! The last thing left is to swallow the extinguished camphor. It is done ordinarily!

Astrology- A Pseudo- Science

A young lady astrologer appears to have been greatly per-

Encyclo. 1973, says, "As a means of prophecy astrology is worthless and without foundation. But through stimulating detailed observation of celestial motions from prehistoric times, astrology has become the parent

PROF. A. M. DHARMALINGAM

turbed over the criticism of astrology as a superstition by rationalists, educationalists and scientists and complains that they have been lecturing all over Bangalore quoting from outdated editions of encyclopaedias and dictionaries. She herself quotes from a dictionary of 1941, and says it is antiquated. I wish to quote a few definitions from the editions

of astronomy." The topic Astrology is not to be found in the Chambers Dictionary of Science and Technology, 1974.

The young astrologer tries to make a nice distinction between planets and grahas though the status given to both is the same, namely bodies or points that have a field of force. The ancient astrologers and their present descendants still continue to ignore Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, the asteroids between Mars and Jupiter, and the flares and black spots of the sun in casting horoscopes as if they are of no consequence, when the fact is that ancients did not know all these facts of nature. The horoscopes are therefore something like the chemist making a mixture omitting half the medicines in the prescription of a doctor and adding some of his own concoctions not in the prescription. The end-result on the patient may be imagined

Much is made of the non-existing grahas Rahu and Ketu. The moon is a graha, but it also creates out of nothing two grahas by the intersection points in space by meeting the earth's ecliptic in its orbit on either sides of the moon. The moon thus accounts for occupancy of three house in the chart. If this intersection makes for imaginary grahas, then the moon of the other planets in the solar system must behave likewise. Mars has two moons, Jupiter eleven and Saturn nine. All these moons must be making 22 rahus and 22 ketus. But they are of no importance to astrologers, because they did not know about the existence of these

nationalists, educationalists and scientists and complains that they have been lecturing all over Bangalore quoting from outdated editions of encyclopaedias and dictionaries. She herself quotes from a dictionary of 1941, and says it is antiquated. I wish to quote a few definitions from the editions

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1972, says "As a popular pastime or superstition, however, astrology still engages the attention of millions of civilised people." Chambers Encyclo 1966 says, "It is a strange mixture of science and fantastic imagery. In spite of the advance of science, there is still a widespread belief in astrology due perhaps to an innate desire to see into the future and such credulity is not confined to the illiterate." The Encyclopaedic Dictionary 1971, calls astrology, "a pseudo-science concerned with the heavenly bodies, Astrology was a curious mixture of science and quakery." Pears Encyclo. 1974, says, "Astrology is the so-called art or science of foretelling the future from the positions of the stars. The superstitious belief that the fortunes of men and nations affected for good or evil by the movement of the stars and planets flourished in Babylon." The Penguin's Encyclo 1965 says 'A pseudo science of divination based on a belief that the heavenly bodies and their conjunction influence events on earth". The New space

planetary satellites. The heavens contain millions of stars, but our astrology takes account of only 27, either by dividing the stars into 27 groups or simply by identifying some imaginary 27.

It is argued that the reason or methodology for the laws of nature like gravitation are unexplainable, and therefore the arbitrary rules of astrology must also be inexplicable. No question could be asked about the astrologically determined sex malefic or benefic nature of the planets or stars, their force or fields of action. This is like the village school master snubbing the inquiring student. "Don't ask questions. It is said so by the ancient scriptures and must be believed in full faith."

The Stupid Devotees

Goddess

Padmavathy : See darling that poor Srinivasan comes to Tirupathi regularly every month though it is beyond his means. Why don't you get him some 10 lacs in the next jackpot?

Lord

Venkateswara : Sorry, dear according to his destiny chalked out by Brahma, this Srinivasan has to die of perennial poverty as a result of which his young and beautiful daughter Kamala has to marry an old man of 60 years, as a result of which she has to become a widow soon, and not being able to get on with her in laws and step children she has to elope with the neighbour's boy Prem Kumar who has to produce a Movie with Kamala as a heroine and his friend Gopal, as the director, and since the picture will be an utter flop, Kamala will end up as a prostitute with. Prem Kumar as a pimp but, Gopal will in due course attain national fame with the result India's prestige in the film field will enhance manifold with the result many American, British and other European producers will come all the way to India to produce high cost films as a result of which our Indian producers.....

Padmavathy : Stop it - I am talking about the jackpot of 10 lacs to Srinivasan

People do not have real faith in astrology, which survives only because of the fear and hope of the credulous. The thousands of candidates that stand for election do not go to the astrologers to find out their chances by their horoscopes or favourite numbers or colours. If they did they could save themselves lots of money, energy and time. One wonders if the astrologers are feeling jittery over the few lectures of rationalists and educationalists in and around Bangalore. They require to be assured that so long as the vast mass of humanity including the educated, happen to be gullible, there is no danger either to the profession or the income.



Venkateswara : Let me complete, my dear. Again as per the destiny planned by Brahma, this jackpot should go to Sekhar who with this money will try to become a business magnate, but among others his own brother-in-law will cheat him to the tune of 5 lacs with which he himself will start a lucrative smuggling business in which he will make several crores of rupees with which his eldest son will not only get elected to the Parliament but will also get a number of his friends elected and after buying some more M.P.s. he will have to become the Prime Minister upon which his younger brother will start mismanaging the internal and external affairs of the country as a result of which there will be no place in the country as a result of which all the people in the country will suffer untold miseries.....

Padmavathy : I can't stand the bore- I am asking you just to change the next winner of the Jackpot

Venkateswara : But this will have far reaching consequences upsetting the entire course of events in the whole world-can you suggest a way out to change the destiny of Srinivasan alone without affecting any one else?

Padmavathy : If we can't do a damn thing why then these stupid worship us?

Venkateswara : You said it !- because they are stupid

Ms. Vasundhra, Madras

NEWS AND NOTES

MANTRIC FAILS TO MOVE THE PATA.

Modern science is so developed that the old Mantric superstitious views have been dethroned as they were proved false and baseless. But the faith on Mantric happenings is attached with religion and hence it is difficult to remove these false and harmful acts of credulity. Not only illiterates but also educated people are victimised by socalled Mantric or spiritual powers.

An incident took place at the residence of a well educated and legally acquainted person of Raghujji Nagar, Nagpur. According to a member of the Rationalist Association Nagpur, Mr. Harish Krishnarao Deshmukh, the story reveals that the girl was in a habit to go out of her home due to mental weakness or abnormality. The family members and some neighbours believed that the girl was under the influence of GHOST. Thus efforts were made to detect the name of GHOST and provocator.

The famous Mantric named Pandurang Dhanorkar resident of Paradsinga, who used Mantric experiments as his business since 15 years was invited with policeman, Patil and another gentleman as a witness for the experiment.

On 18.4.78 at 9.00 p.m. Mantric Dhanorkar took off wheat grains from the person of the girl and spread it on the cement floor. He placed a lota on the grains and a pata (wooden) on the lota. Mr. Harish Deshmukh

sat on the pata from 11.00 p.m. to 12.30 a.m. Mantric lighted camphor, Dhup and Agarbatti and chanted mantras but did not move. Then Mr. Deshmukh sat on the pata in Padmasan position from 12.30 a.m. to 1.30 a.m. but Mantric failed to move the Pata. Next day the same experiment was conducted but in vain. This experiment had been earlier conducted many times 'successfully' and lot of money collected from gullibles.

The scientific reason behind the movement of pata is that the circulation of the blood stops at the feet due to the pressure of body and they become senseless. The person cannot balance his upper body parts and slight movement accelerates the round bottom of lota like the ball in a circus and hence the pata gets moving.

Thus there is no divine power or Mantric power behind moving the pata.

Now the Girl is under medical treatment and is improving.

Mr. Ratanakumar Meshram-
B.Sc., LL.B

* * * *

FERNADES' (IR) RATIONALISM!

The following is the text of the reply received from Mr. George Fernandes, the Hon'ble Minister for Industry, Government of India to the resolution passed by Bombay Rationalist Association which was published in the July 78 issue of FREETHOUGHT.

Dear Mr. Lokhandwala,

I have your letter of June 14 containing the resolution of condemnation of Mr. George Fernandes.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was my political leader and his ideas continue to inspire me. Dr. Lohia never wanted to question any of his comrade's faith in God. In fact, Dr. Lohia himself was an ardent follower of Mahatma Gandhi whose faith in God was stronger than that of most people.

You are being dishonest in trying to suggest in your resolution that I have deviated from many of my beliefs and that I had different view of socialism before my election to Parliament. I may also add that it is totally irrational for rationalists to condemn the other person for his convictions.

In any case, you seem to be an incorrigible bunch and you are most welcome to hold your views and condemn those who do not agree with yours.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sd George Fernandes

According to the Hon'ble Minister's logic all the followers of Gorai should also be believers since Goraji himself was an ardent follower of Gandhiji whose 'faith in God was stronger than that of most people'. The students of logic have a lot of new principles to learn from the Minister!

Mr. Fernandes' irrationalism is profound and deep-rooted. It does not matter to him that his immediate leader, Dr. Lohia was a rationalist. He traces his irrationalism to Gandhi. An example of ancestral worship!

Is it the prerogative of only irrationalists to condemn the convictions of others? Rationalists have to be helpless on lookers?

As regards the last para, it is believers like Mr. George Fernandes whose minds are completely closed. May we ask who is incorrigible, a believer who, like an ostrich, ignores scientific thought or a rationalist who is receptive to new ideas?

* * * *

MUMMIDIVARAM BALAYOGI

(contd. from June issue)

After Dr. V. Prabhakara Rao met the Hon. Minister for Health, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, a request was made to the Balayogi Trust to permit IRA to keep Mr. Subba Rao (Balayogi) under observation. The full text of the letter is reproduced below:

To

Balayogi Trust,
Mummidiyaram

Dear Sirs,

For a number of years we have been watching the propaganda of your trust about the saintly nature and miraculous powers of Mr. Subbarao popularly known as Balayogi. Our attention has also been drawn to various printed appeals that you are sending to innocent people all over India requesting for huge donations. Though we used to ignore your activities earlier which were on a comparatively smaller scale, in view of the tremendous increase in the following of the Balayogi, we are now constrained to intervene in the matter and cry a halt to the (religious) fraudulent practices going on at Mummidiyaram.

As we strongly believe that it is almost impossible for any human being to live for years without food and water, we will be thankful if you allow us to verify for ourselves your claims. This sort of strange phenomena will interest the medical profession. If the Balayogi is really living

for the last 20 years without consuming any food or water, the same will give an opportunity for the profession to do more research in this area.

We would like to therefore have Mr. Balayogi kept under the observation of a few medical men and rationalists before accepting that human beings can live without food and water indefinitely. For this purpose we have no objection to depute some of our members and medical men to go over to either Rajahmundry or Kakinada where facilities are available for our investigation. We hope that you will have no objection to bring Balayogi to one of these two places.

Since it is the duty of all of us to find out the truth we hope that you will extend your cooperation to us in our investigations. In case under any pretext and for any reason you are not agreeable for conducting the tests on Balayogi we will be forced to come to the conclusion that all your claims that Balayogi lives without food and water are fraudulent and you are running your trusts and missions for your vested interests. Your refusal to cooperate with us may also force us to resort to other means legally open to us.

Thanking you and assuring you of our best services at all times in the cause of rationalism.

Yours humanly,
Sd/-A. SURYANARAYANA
General Secretary

Since there was no reply from the Trust, the following reminder was sent to them. Simultaneously action has been initiated to explore various other Possibilities to force the issue, in case Mr. Subba Rao and his gang do not come forward voluntarily (to co-operate with IRA,

BY REGISTERD POST ACK-DUE
To Balayogi Trust,
Mummidivaram

Dear Sirs,

Please refer to our lr.no. 83/9944 dt. 27-5-78 requesting you to permit us to investigate the very unusual and peculiar case of Mr. Subba Rao (known as Balayogi). As the phenomenon of surviving for decades without food and water will be of special interest to the entire medical profession, scientists and Rationalists, if your propaganda that he is living without food and water is really true, you must help us forthwith to proceed further with our own investigation. If these claims are verified and certified as genuine by the doctors and rationalists, Mr. Subba Rao's powers are sure to create a stir all over the world. Kindly therefore favour us with your early approval to enable us to make necessary arrangements for our investigation.

In case we do not receive any reply for this letter also, we will be forced to come to the logical conclusion that Mr. Subba Rao has no powers what-so-ever and you are all only trying to make a livelihood by using him as an instrument. We will also be forced to resort to other means open to us for exposing the fraud being perpetuated by you all these years.

Yours humanly,
Sd. A SURYANARAYANA
GENERAL SECRETARY

* * * *

SECULAR SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

The Secular Society of Victoria was established on 9 July, 1978. Harry Hastings Pearce, the 80 year old poet, writer and historian was elected President.

The inaugural meeting called for public disclosure of funding of religious organisa-

tions, and for audited balance sheets to be made available to the general public, for example, the disposition of all monies raised at public collections such as Sunday's Salvation Army appeal.

The Society resolved that it was opposed to the subsidy of religious organisations by rate and taxpayers. It called for a referendum of ratepayers to be held in conjunction with the coming municipal elections to see if ratepayers in each municipality wanted to continue to subsidise religious organisations. (Figures indicate that the abolition of this subsidy in the City of Melbourne could cause an immediate drop in rates of 10 per cent or an immediate increase in revenue of 82.4 million. Similar, savings could be made in all municipalities).

—N. H. Sinnott, Kensington,
Australia

* * * *

PRESIDENT'S CONFESSION AND APPEAL

Mr. Sanjiva Reddy said on 8-7-78 at Visakhapatnam.

Instead of giving higher education we have to think whether we have to follow the system of the USSR to branch off students after basic education to different lines of avocation.

200 CAPITALIST FAMILIES

He said it was not the system of the Government (obviously referring to communism) but it was the economic results the system provided which should be viewed. He remarked that every party in the country advocated socialism, but how far it was achieved was the question. The entire economy centred on 200 capitalist families. He said that at the

recent convention of the Chambers of Commerce in calcutta, it was revealed the total capital of 45 families in the country had grown from hundreds of crores to thousands of crores. In this connection he recalled the statement of Jawaharlal Nehru that the country's economy would be controlled by a few if proper steps were not taken. He also mentioned how the land reforms had failed.

The president called on the elite not connected with politics to discuss these affairs and provide solutions as to how best to curb the growth of capitalism and landlordism in the country. He said these were the problems fit to be debated in universities and colleges.

Referring to the political situation in the country, the president preferred a three-party system. He said the Communist party had won several seats in the 1952 elections and he thought it was going to be an alternative party, but all hopes were belied when it split into several groups. He appealed to them to unite again and provide a formidable third party to the country.

* * * *

HARE KRISHNA GROUP MURDERS

Six more members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) - all foreign nationals - have been remanded to police custody in connection with the alleged murder in the ISKCON temple premises in Juhu in North Bombay on Sunday 2nd July, 78.

This action came even as public resentment is said to be mounting against the activities of the ISKCON an enquiry into whose functioning was demanded by a Bombay Municipal Councillor on 5-7-78.

Meanwhile, Mr. P. A. Hatre, Councillor, announced a "marcha" of the citizens of the Juhu area on July 9 and a "Juhu bandh" on the same day.

Mr. Hatre said a memorandum was proposed to be presented to the Chief Minister demanding the take-over of the temple by the Government and the appointment of a committee to probe the ISKCON activities and the source of their funds.

In the incident last Sunday a film dancer was allegedly attacked and later he died in hospital. The dancer, Dilip Malhotra, was alleged to have been attacked when he took objection to the behaviour of the Security Officer of the temple towards a woman devotee.

The temple's general manager and the security officer along with an Indian security guard were arrested on Monday and remanded to police custody.

Police said four Americans, one Canadian and one Argentinian were arrested last evening and a court had remanded them to police custody till July 17. Meanwhile, the police have mounted a vigil in the temple area - PTI.

(Courtesy: 'Hindu', 6-7-78)

(Will the Government of India put a stop to foreign funds and missionaries entering India?—Ed.)

* * * *

DR. MADALYN VISITS INDIA

Dr. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the great American Atheist recently visited India and got acquainted with Indian Rationalist Movement. Though due to some technical problems she had to go over to India as a tourist, she spared no

efforts to meet a large number of rationalists during her short stay of two weeks in India,

She landed at Delhi on 11th July along with her son Mr. Jon Murray and her grand daughter. They were received by Mr. Edamaruku, Secretary of the Delhi Rationalist Association who also accompanied them throughout their tour in India.

She commenced her tour of India with Hyderabad from which she proceeded to Vijayawada. At these places she met many veteran rationalists. She was at Madras from 17th to 20th July. She visited IRA's office and learnt first-hand the activities of the Association. She was all praise for the excellent work being

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carried out by the Association. On 18th and 19th, two informal meetings were arranged at which Dr. Madalyn explained to the Indian Rationalists the problems faced by the American Atheists and the projects taken up by them to mobilise the confirmed Atheists of America. These meetings were attended by Managing Committee members of IRA and other active rationalists of Madras city including such great personalities like Mr. Justice S. Mohan and Mr. N. Ram. While Mr. A. Suryanarayana and Ms. Vasundhra hosted a lunch in her honour on 18th,

Mr & Ms. C. A. Seshadri arranged a Dinner to felicitate her on 19th night. On 20th morning she went to Bombay for a two-day halt there. From there she proceeded to Calcutta on her way to Delhi where she addressed a Rationalist gathering. As scheduled, on 25th she left India for Téharan.

This short visit of Dr. Madalyn enabled her and Indian Rationalists to get to know each other better and has paved the way for many more visits. It is hoped that during her future visits she will be able to address large gatherings in different parts of the country. △



Dr. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, her son Mr. Jon Murray and her grand daughter with some of the Managing Committee Members of I.R.A.

Standing from Left :

Mr G. S. Ranjan (Committee Member), Mr. A. Suryanarayana (General Secretary), Ms. Vasundhra (Treasurer), Mr. C. A. Seshadri (Committee Member and Editor, FREETHOUGHT), Mr. S. Selva Ganapathy (Asst. Treasurer), Mr P. V. Prakash (Joint Secretary) and Mr. M. V. Ramamurthy (Vice-President)

Readers Forum

(cont from page 230)

Sir,

This refers to the reader's letter regarding names with caste appendages and of puranic origin (FREETHOUGHT, April 1978)

I am of opinion that change of name for ideological purpose, is a superficial act, encouraging cunningness, show and hypocrisy. Under the impact of the national movement, many Brahmins dropped their caste titles. But most of them took pride in disclosing how and why they did so. It gave an opportunity to pay lip service to the principle of equality. Then there are others who drop their titles, in order to gain certain personal advantages. Another kind of example is of some scheduled caste families. They adopted brahmin title, in order to raise their status, but not knowing, that it amounted to a recognition of the very inequality they wanted to denounce.

These instances show that changing of names and titles (for the sake of an ideology amounts to a mere camouflage. They are the methods of politicians. What IRA wants is a sincere behavioural change in personal lives, not show. Where is the harm if the old names continue? on the contrary, there is a sociological advantage in it. It is instructive to discover a Muslim, a Christian, a brahmin, a sikh, a Bengali or a Mysorian and so on having accepted rationalism. What is the point in knowing them merely as Mr. A.B.C D.?

—Mukund, Shillong

O'Hair : we need a non-Government organisation on an international scale to be affiliated with UNO. There should be an international board to co-ordinate our activities. I am willing to take up the initiative in this regard.

Editor : Is abortion legal in U.S.A. ?

O'Hair : Yes, under Federal Court Ruling Honerxer in view of the right to live amendment in many states, the right to abortion cannot be fully utilised. This is indeed ridiculous. Taking it to its logical conclusion, even for a spontaneous abortion one could be charged criminally. After all when the sperm fertilises an egg, it could be legally argued, fertilised egg has life. Disposal of the clot of blood containing the fertilised egg will need legal approval, as would disposal of foetus.

The lady who is considered to be the most dangerous in U.S.A. because 'she could speak and write' - was so full of energy and life. She spoke forcefully dubbing all religions as anti-women and anti-peace and spoke on how man was born an atheist and subsequently converted to theism through indoctrination. △

Book Review

Owing to paucity of space, the regular feature "Book Review" could not be accommodated. The feature will be resumed from next month —EDITOR

Test for Reason No. 11

DINESH NETTAR

A man wants to give a very small party. He intends to invite his brother-in-law's father father inlaw's brother, brother's father-in-law and father's brother-in-law. What is the minimum number of persons that he can invite assuming a high degree of first-cousin marriages? How?

Rules :

1. The entries should be received on or before 20-8-78
2. There is a prize of Rs. 10/- in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there are more than one correct entry, the prize will be decided on lots.
3. Readers are requested to quote their Membership or Subscription Number.

Solution to Test for Reason No. 10

1. In any subject, the student coming second must get at least 2 points and one who comes first must get at least 3 points. So the total number of points per subject is atleast 6.
2. Since Dick got 9, and since he got at least 3 in one subject, and at least 1 each in the remaining subjects, there are not more than 7 subjects
3. The total number of points secured by all of them is $40(22+9+9)$ Since each subject has the same point system, 40 must be divisible by the number of subjects. By considering that there are 7 or less subjects, and that each subject has at least 6 points, we have only three possibilities;

	No. of Subjects	No. of points Per Subject	Total No. of points
(a)	5	8	40
(b)	4	10	40
(c)	2	20	40

4. Of these, (c) is ruled out, since Dick got at the most 8 points in English, and so the total number of points cannot exceed $16(8+7+1)$
5. If (b) is true, then Tom got an average of 5.5 points per subject, i.e., he got at least 6 in some subjects. He could not have got more than 6 since Dick got at the most 6 in English (and 1 each in the other three). So Tom got 6 in three subjects and 4 (to add up to 22) in one subject. Then the total number of points per subject is $11.(6+4+1)$ So (b) is not correct.
6. If there were 5 subjects, Tom got 4.4 points average, and so he got at least 5 in some subjects. Then Dick cannot get more than 5 in English (and 1 in each in the other 4 subjects.) Then Tom got 5 in 4 subjects and 2 in one subject.

Since Dick came first in English, Tom came second in it. Dick came third in every other subject, and so Harry came second in all those subjects.

The points learned are as follows :

Subject	Tom	Dick	Harry	Total
English	2	5	1	8
Arithmetic	5	1	2	8
Subject 3	5	1	2	8
Subject 4	5	1	2	8
Subject 5	5	1	2	8
Total	22	9	9	40

Thus Harry came second in Arithmetic.

Emboldened by such overt and covert encouragement, caste Hindus have been attacking 'Harijans' all over. First it was Belchi, then there was Pathhadda on June 19, 1977 and now it is Villupuram, Tamilnadu. However much the Governments concerned would like to play down these atrocities, it is clear that the contradictions arising out of encouraging religion on the one hand and asking for amity on the other would only end up in religious and caste conflicts all over the country. Encouraging religion will encourage religious leaders and priests who have for long suppressed 'lower' castes. This anachronism cannot be tolerated in the last quarter of the 20th century. Let the depressed assert their rights against the might of a religious Government and retaliate!

Attention Please!

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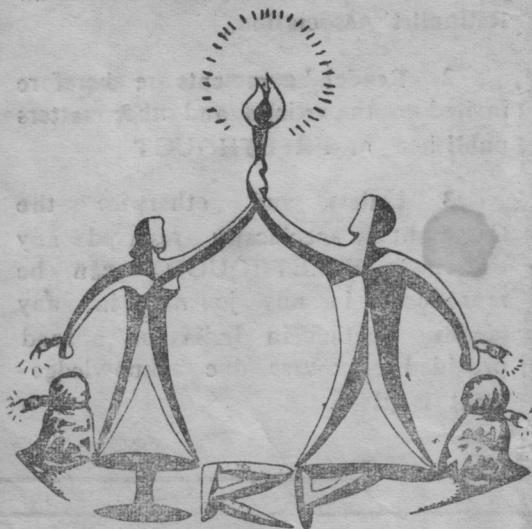
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